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Teacher Educator's Competencies: What is Needed in a Multi-faceted and Contested Profession

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1. Introduction

According to a recent review study of Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2015), studying teacher educators has become a distinct research domain within the research into teacher preparation. Especially in the past ten years, the number of publications shedding light on aspects of the profession of teacher educators has increased (Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen, 2014). But it is still considered an under-researched area (Davey, 2013). In addition to this, Loughran states (in Lunenberg et al., 2014, vii):

"It is almost as (...) that the work of teacher educators has been superficially perceived as relatively straightforward and easy to understand. As a consequence (...) the sophisticated knowledge, skills and ability necessary to do that work well, are either overlooked, or, sadly, ignored."

But who are they? Teacher educators constitute a distinct professional group within education, differing from teachers in primary and secondary education. Jean Murray (2005) in her study with Trevor Male qualified them as 'second order' teachers. Teachers teach pupils in primary or secondary education, teacher educators support the learning of (prospective) teachers in a higher education context.

Teacher educators are a *heterogeneous* group. They work in different settings (Lunenberg, 2010). There is a growing group of school-based teacher educators, co-operating with university-based teacher educators and their students (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Van Velzen and Volman, 2009). Some teacher educators have a single school-subject as their main field of interest, others have a background in pedagogy or psychology. In addition, teacher educators are increasingly expected to support the continuous professional development of teachers and to conduct research (Koster, Dengerink, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008; Swennen, Jones & Volman, 2010).

In this contribution, I use a broad *definition of teacher educators*: all those who teach or coach (student) teachers with the aim of supporting their professional development. This definition corresponds with the definition which, as a result of a peer-learning activity, is in use in EU-publications (European Commission, 2013).

This brings us to the question what these teacher educators have to know and have to be able to do.

In recent years, several national frameworks defining the competencies of teacher educators have been developed by national associations of teacher educators (ATE, 2003; 2008; VELON, 2001; 2012; VELOV, 2012; Mets & Van den Hauwe, 2015). In these same years, the use of frameworks has been increasingly criticized in research (Sachs 2003; Kelchtermans 2013; Ceulemans, Simons & Struyf, 2014). According to these critics, these frameworks do not reflect the complexity of the profession. They view them as simple instruments for quality control in an era of accountability, and therefore counterproductive for teacher educator development.

Central questions

This debate brings to the fore some central questions to be dealt with:

- What does recent research say about this multifaceted character of the profession of teacher educators?
- Is it (still) possible and meaningful to define generic competencies for teacher educators?
- If so, what do they look like and what can we say about an underlying knowledge base?
- What does this mean for the selection, education and professional development of teacher educators?

Main argument

In this contribution, I will suggest and, on the basis of published research, will try to underpin that it does make sense to formulate generic competencies, but that the required competencies depend on contextual factors, such as the prevailing vision on teacher education, and the specific role the teacher educator plays or wants to play within it. I will also bring forward that the necessary education of teacher educators is highly undervalued in both research and practice, and that the research into the professional development of teacher educators covers only a part of the multifaceted profession.

2. The multifaceted teacher educator

Research into what teacher educators do and what their role is, can be approached from different angles. This part of the contribution is mainly based on the review study into the roles of teacher educators of Lunenberg, Dengerink and Korthagen (2014), some recent Flemish PhD-studies based on an approach of 'enacted professionalism' (Tack and Vanderlinde, 2014; Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2014), a recent study into teacher educators in New Zealand (Davey, 2013), the first results of a European survey study into what teacher educators are actually doing and on some studies focusing on the biographical perspective.

2.1. Multiple roles of teacher educators

Lunenberg et al. (2014), in their review study based on a selection of 136 peer-reviewed articles out of a total of 1262, identified six main roles of teacher educators:

1. Teacher of teachers. The second order character of this role (Murray & Male, 2005) requires a specific pedagogy of teacher education, of which 'modelling' ('teach as you preach, 'walk your talk') and explicating are important aspects (Loughran & Berry, 2005; Swennen, Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2008).

2. Researcher. The attention to the role of the teacher educator as researcher is gaining in strength. Among teacher educators, there is no consensus on whether they have to fulfil the role

of researcher and – if that should be the case - what this role involves: is it about reading literature, supervising research students or conducting research oneself? Several studies have shown that teacher educators have different views concerning the question of whether or not conducting research is a part of their work (Smith, 2005; Wold, Young & Risko, 2011; Murray, Czerniawski & Barber, 2011).

3. *Coach*. Coaching of the learning process takes place both at the institute and in the workplace, i.e. the school. The study of Wold et al. (2012) shows that teachers consider the coaching role of their teacher educators as the most influential. According to (prospective) teachers, essential aspects of this role are openness, accessibility, enthusiasm, passion, forgiveness, inspiration, respect, helpfulness, integrity and being generous and open-minded. Too often, mentor teachers base their behaviour on their own personal experiences as a teacher and advise students about practical issues in their specific school situation. Making their own teaching behaviour and the underlying thinking explicit proves to be hard (Van Velzen and Volman, 2009). 48

4. *Curriculum developer*. The development of a curriculum for teacher education is the subject of a relatively large number of studies, especially into curriculum development in collaboration with schools. However, closer analysis reveals that few articles have the teacher-educator-as-curriculum-developer as an object of (self-)study. Several studies reported on the lack of collaboration among teacher educators in curriculum development, with the result that many of the courses were highly disjointed (e.g. Kosnik and Beck, 2008).

5. *Gatekeeper*. In the role of gatekeeper, the teacher educator monitors the access of the student to the teaching profession, and in several cases also the admission to the teacher education curriculum. The yardstick by which teacher educators measure the future teacher is mainly determined by specified standards and profiles or rubrics. The emphasis on constructivist concepts has led to a wide use of portfolios in teacher education, and the role of the teacher educator as an assessor of portfolios. As to the practice component, the role of the school-based teacher educator as assessor and gatekeeper has become increasingly important.

6. *Broker*. University-based and school-based teacher educators increasingly share the responsibility for the education and development of (prospective) teachers. This calls for teacher educators able to shape this cooperation process. He An (2009) introduced the term 'broker' for this role, often carried out in the setting of a community of learners (Wenger, 2000).

2.2. *Enacted professionalism*

Since this review study, some new PhD-studies have been published. In Flanders in particular, we see research with a strong focus on actual teacher education practices in conceptualizing and studying teacher educator professionalism, the so-called 'enacted professionalism'. Regarding the dispositions of teacher educators on research, Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) in their study found three types of teacher educators: the enquiring teacher educator, the well-read teacher educator, and the teacher educator-researcher. The first category refers to teacher educators who recognise and appreciate that there are teacher educators as researchers, but they themselves do not have the knowledge and understanding to conduct research. On the other side of the spectrum, the teacher educator-researchers have the ability to engage in research and by nature conduct research into their teaching practices, and are convinced that engaging in research is the norm in order to become a good teacher educator. Tack notes that the latter category is relatively small in Flanders. Vanassche and Kelchtermanns (2014) in their study focused more on the role of teacher of teachers and the kind of teachers teacher educators want

to educate. They identified three teacher educator positionings: the teacher educator of pedagogues, of reflective teachers and the teacher educator of subject teachers. So within two of the roles, identified in the review study, we already see some very fundamental differentiations.

2.3. Teacher educators about what they are doing

When asked what teacher educators are actually doing, the differentiation in activities is still larger. The first results of a European survey, based on more than 900 university-based teacher educator respondents, show that core activities are, not surprisingly, teaching, supervising and mentoring students and beginning teachers, providing professional development to teachers, and being engaged in research (InFoTED, still unpublished data). But asked about additional activities, the survey offers a large variety of answers, e.g. (the actual list is about four times longer): selection; recruitment; supervision of placements in schools; coordinating the work of other teacher educators; developing new courses; external examining; evaluation; admissions; administration for courses; supporting other colleagues; consultancy work; faculty management; managing a partnership of colleges; quality assurance; strategic management of programmes; (being) a national committee member; (being) a programme leader; publishing professional and academic writing; giving emotional and developmental support; developing school partnerships; developing blended learning; leading and marketing programmes; interviewing; providing career guidance; writing funding applications; community engagement, etc. We also see this notion of a large variety in Davey's study into teacher educators in New Zealand (2013, 79):

"The notion of job complexity is one that emerged constantly from their stories. They all had a conception of their role, work and job as multi-faceted and multi-layered – one in which many aspects overlap with others. As they described them, their jobs were a complex mix of the pedagogical, pastoral, scholarly, interpersonal, managerial, administrative, advisory and consultative. Moreover, they often had to operate across these quite different roles at the same time."

What comes out of these additional job-descriptions are additional clusters besides teaching and research: a managerial-administrative, and a service cluster, consisting of advisory and consultancy work, participating in national and international development projects and organisations, service to the community and the further development of university-school cooperation at different levels.

2.4. With different biographies

Regarding the background of university-based teacher educators, in the US the most usual way of becoming a teacher educator is having some teaching experience, writing a thesis, or doing a doctoral study in education directly after a master and then enter teacher education (Acker, 1997; Zeichner, 2005). In many other countries teacher educators enter teacher education directly from primary or secondary education. In most of these cases, those with teaching experience in secondary education have a Master in a discipline related to the school-subject they are teaching, and not a degree in educational sciences. School-based teacher educators don't even enter higher education, though they are expected to mentor prospective teachers on a higher education level. So, for the large majority, entering teacher education is a second career in not their first discipline.

And during their career as a teacher educator, the character and the scope of their activities will become broader. In the beginning, their main focus will be on being the teacher of teachers and

the mentor, but sooner or later they will also get involved in research, in supporting the continuing professional development of teachers, in service and maybe also in managerial tasks.

2.5. In different contexts

Additionally, the responsibilities and activities of teacher educators are highly dependent on the way teacher education is looked upon in their immediate environment. These views are diverse and partially explain the not undisputed status and character of teacher education. What may be seen as the most prominent scenarios are on the one hand the school-based scenario, highly focusing on a practitioner-technicist approach, informed by classroom experience and local school settings; and on the other hand the academic, research-based or even research-driven, university-based scenario, where teachers are prepared to become agents of change and critical thinking, and where teacher education deals with broad social and philosophical issues and the more generic pedagogical implications (Aubusson & Schuck, 2013). This means that teacher educators have to navigate between the two and to encompass the requirements of both schools and academia. Besides, in universities we still see the assumption that knowledge necessary for educating teachers is not so much about teacher education pedagogies but about the content or discipline knowledge, and that effective teacher education focuses on transferring this content knowledge rather than on knowledge that might be specific to teacher education (Goodwin et al., 2014). Within teacher education there are several curriculum approaches. In addition, the political context plays an important role, with in some countries a strong focus on PISA-scores and accountability, or on the other hand on social justice. And we see all kinds of variations within and between these scenarios.

2.6. Conclusion: a large diversity

Thus, the profession of teacher educators is, as Kari Smith (2011) labelled it, multifaceted and characterised by a large variety of responsibilities, roles and activities, especially among more experienced teacher educators within universities. Though the teaching and coaching of prospective teachers is prevalent, many teacher educators are involved in research as well. But they also have very different dispositions regarding research, for a great deal dependent on different expectations and discourses within their work environment. In addition, quite a lot of activities may be shared around administration, leadership, and quality assurance, within the own institute and in school-university partnerships. And what seems to be undervalued and also less researched are the activities which we may group under the third task of universities besides teaching and research: service. This includes supporting continuing professional development of teachers, supporting innovation in schools, community service, participating or leading national and international networks and innovative projects.

This diversity in the work of a teacher educator is related to (a) prior experience and expertise, (b) the career-phase they are in, (c) the position of teacher education within their university or school and (d) personal and contextual prevailing dominant conceptions on good teacher education and research.

3. Is it (still) possible and meaningful to define general competencies for teacher educators?

So, with this enormous variety in mind, we come to the question: does it still make sense to define general competencies for teacher educators? Competencies are here understood as a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills enabling a person to act effectively in a

professional situation. Generic competencies indicate sufficient knowledge and skills enabling someone to act in a wide variety of situations. Because each level of responsibility has its own requirements, the issue of competence can occur in any period of a person's life or at any stage of his or her career.

3.1. National frameworks defining competencies of teacher educators

As has been said above, in several countries national frameworks defining the competencies of teacher educators have been developed. Important to note is that these frameworks were developed by teacher educators themselves, mostly within national associations of teacher educators. Those who initiated the development of these standards highly valued the ownership of the professionals themselves. Also, the developers were aware that these frames of reference were developed in a politico-social context and an educational discourse which might change over time. The frames of reference were developed for a certain period, and should be revised periodically. Actually, in the Netherlands, a fourth version of the professional standard of teacher educators is in use at present. Our first conclusion is that the critique that these standards are imposed, needs to be refined.

But still, we have to be prudent with ownership. As Koster and Dengerink (2008) state:

"Even when a professional standard is developed by the professional group itself, alertness on the issue of what 'ownership' means, and how it is generated, still remains necessary. For example, a core group of teacher educators could very easily set up a new standard which might be 'state of the art' and 'up to date', but which does not accord with the views of the majority" (p. 142).

For instance, Kelchtermans (2013) supports a more practice-based approach of professionalism, against what he calls the "blueprint-approach", where a panel of experts claims the legitimacy to express what teachers or teacher educators should know, be or do. 53 According to him, standards embody the risk to make teachers and teacher educators instrumental executors of goals which are not their own. Professionalism should express itself in someone's specific personal expertise, engagement, responsibility, and care for students.

3.2. Generic standards and the complexity of individual practice

So, we may refine our question to: where do the communally developed standards and the individual interpretation of an individual teacher educator of what he/she has to know and is able to do in a specific context, come together? Is a valuable relation possible between the generic standards and the complexity of individual practice, or are generic standards irrelevant to the individual teacher educator and his or her practice?

Both approaches have to acknowledge that teaching and teacher educator practice are complex and that the effect of the behaviour of teachers and teacher educators on their students is to a certain extent unpredictable. Standards cannot prescribe practice. But at the same time they are a condensed description of what the prevailing conceptions of professional quality are. In that sense, standards can be a valuable frame of reference for individual professionals in helping them to make choices in their professional practice and personal development. And they can also be a frame of reference for individual professionals and teams of how they want to relate to these more generic professional values and competencies. In the Netherlands, the standard is widely used and appreciated as such. In dialogues with colleagues or peers, teacher educators reflect on their own practices and identify their own qualities and professional development needs, using the professional

standard of teacher educators as a frame of reference. And by applying for certification as teacher educator, they express to what extent and in what respect they want to belong to that tribe of professionals we call teacher educators.

3.3. Does defining general competencies make sense?

It is our conclusion that for these reasons it does make sense to define generic competencies of teacher educators, but that it is necessary to be alert to the conditions for ownership and professional autonomy when they are to be described in a national framework like e.g. standards. Their main function should not be managerial or controlling, using them as a 'tick list', but supportive in interpreting and developing one's own personal and professional identity and qualities, in professional dialogue and in instilling a sense of belonging to a professional group. These standards should be open to the diversity within the profession and not be one-dimensional.

Additionally, conditions and contextual factors are important and they differ per country. They characterise to a large extent the debate about and the possibilities for the development of a framework that makes sense to the actual practices of teacher educators.

4. The competencies and knowledge of teacher educators

This brings us to our third question: what do generic competencies of teacher educators look like and what can we say about the underlying knowledge?

To gain a greater grip on the content of the competencies of teacher educators, two ways will be explored in this contribution. The first is a short analysis and comparison of three existing frames of reference. The second focuses on the underlying knowledge teacher educators have or should have, by looking at the structure and contents of a knowledge base for teacher educators as developed in The Netherlands, and at some recent studies.

4.1. Three frames of reference: their focus, structure and contents

Our first analysis deals with the main focus, structure and contents of three frames of reference describing competencies of teacher educators: the American Standards for Teacher Educators, developed within the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE, 2008), the Dutch standard for teacher educators, developed by the Dutch Association of teacher educators VELON (VELON, 2012; Melief, Van Rijswijk & Tigchelaar, 2013), and the Flemish/Belgian 'Ontwikkelingsprofiel' (Developmental profile) of teacher educators, developed within the Flemish association of teacher educators VELOV (VELOV, 2012). All three have been developed in close cooperation with and by teacher educators.

Regarding their *focus*, they are all intended as a starting point for self-evaluation, feedback by peers and intervision, in order to enhance the professional development of teacher educators. To support this development, they all have the accomplished teacher educator as a reference, and not the beginning teacher.

Regarding the *structure*, the American standard consists of nine elements describing the competencies of the teacher educator in behavioural terms (sentences starting with: model teaching..., engaging in inquiry..., providing leadership....), with indicators for each element. The Flemish and Dutch standard both start with some fundamental principles regarding the being, and attitudes and responsibilities of teacher educators. In these fundamental principles, the Dutch version refers to modelling, awareness of one's own values, relatedness to knowledge, inquiry as a stance, and reflection. Subsequently, the Flemish Developmental Profile makes a subdivision into nine generic teacher educator roles (for instance: the teacher educator as a supervisor of learning

and developmental processes; the teacher educator as a content expert; the teacher educator as an involved and critical social participant), and attaches a short description to each of these roles, intended as a source of inspiration for development, of related knowledge, behaviour, and attitude. While the description of roles and competencies of teacher educators is integrated into the American and Flemish standards, we see in the model of the Dutch standard a unique circle of roles and contexts of teacher educators around the foundational principles and competency areas. This circle expresses the diversity within the profession. Several of these roles and contexts, but not all of them, apply to most teacher educators, and for most of them in a different balance. This circle supports the teacher educator in relating to the foundational principles and competency areas. Each area of this circle contains a brief description on aspects such as responsibility, knowledge and behaviour, and references to accompanying sections of the Dutch knowledge base of teacher educators. These competency areas or domains are:

- 1) Pedagogy of teacher education: structuring learning processes of (prospective) teachers; educating and training by modelling; promoting the exchange between theory and practice; monitoring the development of (prospective) teachers;
- 2) Supervising professional learning: interpersonal interaction; dealing with diversity; supervising the development of a professional identity;
- 3) Organisation and management: structuring shared education; working in a multi-disciplinary team; contributing to the organization of teacher education; contributing to teacher education management;
- 4) Developmentally competent: reflection; analytical performance; maintaining one's expertise.

These competency areas are mainly described in verbs with a noun and an adjective.

Overviewing the *contents* of the competency areas of the three frames of reference, all refer to identity-aspects (being), knowledge and understanding, attitude and actual practice or behaviour. Regarding the themes, all deal with the pedagogy of teacher education, interpersonal relations and coaching, and organisation. Compared to the others, the Dutch standard pays little attention to what the ATE standard calls the cultural competency of promoting social justice. Values in the Dutch standard are formulated in a more post-modern way: teacher educators have to be aware of the choices they and other people make.

All standards, and especially the Dutch one, are low key regarding research. They refer to inquiry, or inquiry as a stance, to systematic reflection, to being research-informed, sometimes to scholarship (ATE). Only in sublines we see sentences like 'Engage in action research' (ATE) or 'is able to carry out research or make an academic contribution relating to topics relating to education, learning' (VELOV).

4.2. Underlying knowledge

Our second way of gaining a greater grip on generic competencies of teacher educators is to look at the specific knowledge they need for their individual practices. Particular knowledge and expertise is central to a professional group's identity. It binds together individuals within the group, and distinguishes them from other groups (Verloop, Van Driel & Meijer, 2001; Davey, 2013). Therefore it is important to address the question if the profession of teacher educator requires particular knowledge and expertise.

4.2.1. *The Dutch knowledge base*

The first version of a Dutch knowledge base of teacher educators was developed some years ago (Attema-Noordewier, Dengerink, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2012; VELON 2011). For this knowledge base, an international focus group identified ten knowledge domains, relevant to the profession of teacher educators. Of these domains, four core domains are generic for all teacher educators: the identity of teacher educators, the pedagogy of teacher education, and (with Murray's metaphor (2005) regarding teacher educators as second order teachers in mind) knowledge about learning and learners and knowledge about teaching and coaching. Next, we have a cluster of two 'specific' domains: the contents of these domains are specific to different groups of teacher educators, depending on the kind of institution they are working in (including a differentiation between teacher education for primary, vocational, and lower and upper secondary education), and the specific school subject they are specialised in. The remaining four 'extended' domains are especially relevant to more experienced teacher educators. They are about the policy context and participation in networks, about participation and leadership within their own institution, about the knowledge they need for developing curricula and assessment, and about a special domain on doing research.

For each knowledge domain, four core questions were formulated. E.g. for the domain 'Profession Teacher Educator' the questions 'what is characteristic of the profession', 'what types of teacher educators can be distinguished', 'how do you become a teacher educator' and 'how can you continue your development'. And for each of these questions, an encyclopaedic article was written by a specialist in that field, with further literature references. The character of the corpus of these articles is not monolithic, and even sometimes contradictory, inviting discussion and reflection.

Recently the preparations for an update of the knowledge base have started.

4.2.2. *Recent studies into the underlying knowledge of teacher educators*

In more recent years, several studies regarding the underlying knowledge of teacher educators have appeared, mainly on the basis of interviews with teacher educators (Davey, 2013) or on the basis of what should be in the curriculum of teacher education (Goodwin and Kosnik, 2013). Davey (2013) identified three broad areas of propositional / content knowledge as essential for teacher educators and their student teachers: a comprehensive knowledge of the specialist subject, including pedagogical content knowledge, a comprehensive knowledge of a range of educational and pedagogical theories, and a working knowledge of schools, schooling and the teaching profession in its national context. Additionally, she argued that the kind of knowledge teacher educators ought to have is comprehensive in three dimensions: a. it is not only the knowledge of the what and the how, but it is also knowledge-in-action: teacher educators have 'to walk their own talk', but also 'to talk their own walk'; b. (and related to this) it is what Davey calls the 'nestedness' and 'recursiveness' in the expertise of teacher educators: it is teaching about teaching; and c. the knowledge is inclusive and generalist in its scope. One of her interviewees puts it as follows:

"I get the impression that in most fields of academia success is defined by knowing more and more about less and less. (...) In our job [though], it seems we always have to know more and more about more and more" (p. 115).

Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) distinguish five domains of teacher educator knowledge, based on what should be in the curriculum of teacher education. These domains pay more attention to sociological knowledge than we observe in the Dutch knowledge base, but do represent, perhaps in a somewhat different terminology, the same components as in the Dutch and Flemish frameworks:

- 1) Personal knowledge - autobiography and philosophy of teaching;
- 2) Contextual knowledge - understanding learners, schools, and society;
- 3) Pedagogical knowledge - content, theories, teaching methods, and curriculum development;
- 4) Sociological knowledge - diversity, cultural relevance, and social justice; and
- 5) Social knowledge - cooperative, democratic group processes, and conflict resolution.

4.3. Concluding: structure and main contents of competencies and underlying knowledge of teacher educators

On the basis of several approaches, we may conclude that there appear to be corresponding domains in all of these studies and frameworks regarding the competencies of teacher educators.

The first domain has to do with *foundational principles* and the character and identity of the profession, especially the second order character of the profession.

Then there are some underlying basic domains that *teachers* should master: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge about learning and teaching. And in a broader sense: knowledge on the role of education, and on the roles of schools within and serving the surrounding community.

Then, we see the central domains more specific to *teacher educators*: pedagogy of teacher education, teaching and learning in teacher education as a subsystem of higher education, developing scholarship and conducting research, supporting the continuous professional development of teachers and service to the further development of education in a global and diverse society.

As we have already noted: to combine all of these domains in one person seems to be impossible. To overcome this problem, the Dutch standard has incorporated a differentiation in work context and work profile. So eventually there are teams of teacher educators, with a wide array of expertise. In line with this approach, the Flemish VELOV propagates the use of the 'Ontwikkelingsprofiel' (developmental profile) in teams, in which each individual teacher educator can identify his or her own role and the expertise needed to implement this role. So, this identification and a more elaborated description of general domains of competencies may serve as a frame of reference for personal and professional positioning and development, and for professional discourse within teams of teacher educators.

5. Selection, education and professional development

What does this imply for the selection, education and continuing professional development of teacher educators? Aspects I want to address are selection and induction into the profession; learning needs and learning preferences of teacher educators; factors promoting professional development, and a model of the dynamics of the professional learning of teacher educators.

5.1. Education, selection and induction

Research about the *selection* of teacher educators is very scarce. Twombly et al. (2006) analysed the required and preferred qualifications in advertisements for posts of teacher educators in the US. Nearly all institutions either required or preferred the highest degree, a PhD or the equivalent. This, while, compared to other staff in higher education, in fact relatively few teacher educators have a

PhD. About one third of the advertisements did not ask for prior experience in primary or secondary education. However, especially research universities required experience in higher education teaching. Other detailed studies are lacking, but studies from other countries suggest a much higher percentage than two-thirds of teacher educators with prior experience in primary or secondary education (Murray, 2005; Martinez, 2008). Only recently, a study based on recruitment materials and interviews with personnel involved in the 60 employment of teacher educators at university-based New Zealand initial teacher education distinguished three constructions of teacher-educator-as-academic-worker: the professional expert, the dually qualified, and the traditional academic (Gunn et al., 2015). A general tendency seems to be that, due to a further academisation of teacher education, the quest for teacher educators with a PhD, research experience and experience in higher education teaching will increase. Further research in this field is necessary, because the selection of teacher educators may be an important factor in the quality of teacher education.

Research into the *induction* of beginning teacher educators has increased in recent years, especially the research into their introduction and initial years in academia after their previous career as a teacher in primary or secondary education. Prior education specific to teacher educators is non-existent. In most countries there are professional development trajectories for school-based teacher educators and mentors, but differing considerably in size and quality. Only in some countries (Israel, The Netherlands e.g.) are voluntary courses introducing newly appointed teacher educators into their new professional life at the university. One of the most problematic aspects seems to be that being a respected teacher, you have to find your way to become a teacher of teachers in a higher education context, with the feeling of being a novice, and with conflicting allegiances to scholarship and research. While most inductions are unstructured, many beginning teacher educators valued as very helpful the informal and ad-hoc talks with one or two more experienced colleagues, with whom they could build a positive relationship (Davey, 2013, p. 62). But most studies advocate far more and better formalised induction schemes (Murray & Male, 2005; Martinez, 2008; Korthagen, Loughran & Lunenberg, 2005; Davey, 2013). A very informative brochure on how to set up induction schemes for teacher educators in their initial years of higher education was written by Boyd, Harris and Murray (2007; 2011).

5.2. Differentiated learning needs and preferences of teacher educators

Regarding the professional development of teacher educators, it is helpful to consider the learning needs of teacher educators. Some years ago, Dengerink, Lunenberg and Kools (2015) conducted a survey in the Netherlands of the learning preferences of teacher educators in schools and universities. On what teacher educators prefer to learn, this study found significant learning needs and preferences between schoolbased and university-based teacher educators and between teacher educators in their initial years and experienced teacher educators. In their initial years, teacher educators struggled to find their way and identity and feel a need for coaching or supervision. After their first years of experience, an interest in experimentation and conducting projects emerged. The focus of school-based teacher educators was predominantly on the cooperation with the teacher education institution and on coaching, while the focus of university-based teacher educators was mainly on the pedagogy of teacher education.

Regarding *how* they wanted to learn, all teacher educators had a preference for intentional informal learning (reading literature, attending congresses, intentionally experimenting and having conversations with their colleagues). Significant differences were found between school-based and university-based teacher educators with regard to the person with whom they wanted to learn. School-based teacher educators mainly wanted to learn together with colleagues in their own region, being involved in a partnership between schools and universities, while university-based teacher

educators wanted to learn individually or with colleagues within their own institution and (as experience was growing) also with colleagues of other universities.

On the basis of these differences, four profiles of teacher educators were identified related to their learning preferences. So, it is important to emphasize that there is no 'one size fits all' regarding the professional development of teacher educators. On the other hand, if we want integrated curricula of university- and school-based teacher education, it is important to bring together into professional development arrangements teacher educators from different backgrounds and to make these differences explicit as a basis for collaborative learning.

5.3. Research about and factors promoting professional development.

The review study of Lunenberg et al. (2014) gives a better insight into the factors promoting and inhibiting the professional development of teacher educators in their various professional roles. Hardly any research was found into the professional development of teacher educators in their roles as curriculum developer, gatekeeper and broker. In the other roles, of teacher of teachers, researcher and of coach, some recurring elements promoting professional development were (a) the existence of an accepted frame of reference, (b) an institutional context which has a vision on and facilitates professional learning, (c) personal characteristics such as an inquiring stance and (d) the necessity to connect with prior knowledge and experience. Also, studying one's own practices, for instance by self-study or lesson study, has proven to be very fruitful for one's professional development. Transformative tensions, when professionals are assigned new roles or tasks or are (temporarily) situated within new contexts, are also considered as a powerful factor for professional learning in practice.

5.4. Towards a model of the dynamics of professional learning of teacher educators

Recently, a group of European teacher-educators–researchers, called the International Forum of Teacher Educator Development (InFoTED), has developed a conceptual model of teacher educator development (Vanassche et al., 2015). It is a model, not the model, as it implies normative, political and professional choices.

According to this model, the starting point for the professional development of teacher educators has to be their practice, situated in the actual setting of the local teacher education institute and in the national or regional policy context. The local level refers to, for instance, the culture of the teacher education institute, the existing teacher education programs, or teacher education curricula. This level can also refer to relations with placement schools or other partnerships. The national level refers to national policy measures, existing frameworks, or standards for teacher educators. Finally, teacher educators' practices are situated at a global level stressing their relationship with supranational and societal change.

Within this model, teacher education and the professional attitude of teacher educators should be critical and inquiry oriented, self-regulating, caring, contextually responsive and research informed.

This professional attitude is related to several aspects characterizing the 'dynamics of professional learning', for instance social and technological change, diversity in society, communication and relations between teacher educators and different stakeholders, and the visions teacher educators have about the nature and future of 'good' education.

Finally, what is relevant to the professional learning of teacher educators depends on their role and situation (for instance being situated in a school or university) and their career-phase.

In my view this is a very rich framework. It is respectful of the multifaceted dispositions and practices of teacher educators, it makes contextual factors and the rich character of professional development explicit, and also lends focus to the kind of professional development opportunities which can be developed for the different career phases and the specific positions of the individual teacher educator.

6. Summary and conclusions

In this contribution, we have addressed the character and work of teacher educators, the possibility and meaningfulness of defining generic competencies for teacher educators, what the contents of these competencies and an underlying knowledge base could be and what this means for the selection, education and professional development of teacher educators.

The work of teacher educators can be studied from different perspectives: their roles and responsibilities, their enacted professionalism and what they are actually doing, and their biographies. Their work is multi-faceted. Though teaching and coaching of (prospective) teachers is prevalent, many teacher educators are also involved in research. Additionally, especially later in their career, many of their activities may be grouped around leadership and service: supporting development and innovation in the professional practice of teachers, in schools and school-university partnerships and in national and international educational networks and policy. These leadership and service activities are under-researched. The work of teacher educators is also contested and not always recognised in its double function of serving teachers in schools and serving academic standards in higher education and research.

It makes sense to define general competencies of teacher educators but when they are described in a national framework such as, for instance, standards, it is necessary to be attentive to the conditions in which they are being developed and used. These conditions concern professional ownership and a political and professional culture which is not mainly based on accountability, but also on supporting development and diversity.

The competencies and underlying knowledge of teacher educators are multi-layered. Principles about the character of the profession and identity of teacher educators are foundational. The core of these principles is the multi-layeredness and second order character of the profession. This means that the competencies teacher educators have should include the first order competencies teachers possess: disciplinary content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge about learning and teaching. And in a broader sense: knowledge of and a vision on the role of education, and on the roles of schools within and serving the surrounding community. The second layer is essential and more specific to teacher educators: pedagogy of teacher education, teaching and learning in teacher education as a subsystem of higher education, developing scholarship and conducting research, supporting the continuous professional development of teachers and service to the further development of education in a global and diverse society.

To combine all of these competencies in one person is impossible. Teacher educators are supposed to work in teams. An elaborated description of general domains of competencies may serve as a frame of reference for the personal and professional positioning and development, and for the professional discourse within teams of teacher educators.

The issue of the selection and education of teacher educators is under-valued in research and practice, while it is an essential aspect regarding the quality of teacher education. Prior education specific to teacher educators is non-existent. Induction for teacher educators into a university context is mostly based on informal mentorship by a colleague. What teacher educators want to

learn depends to a large extent on their specific tasks, context and career-phase. As to how they want to learn, most teacher educators prefer 'intentional informal learning'. Concerning their professional development in their roles as curriculum developer, gatekeeper and broker, hardly any research has been conducted. Factors promoting professional development of teacher educators are the existence of an accepted frame of reference, a supportive institutional context, personal characteristics of the teacher educators, and transformative tensions.

This means that principles and notions such as identity-development, communication, responsibility, contextuality and diversity are essential to the professional development of teacher educators individually, in teams and in communities, as a professional group, and to the educational community as a whole.

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